WebSphere software

WebSphere Voice Response gets the vote for Vodacom's customer care and TV polling

Overview

■ **The Challenge**
Vodacom, South Africa's largest cellular provider, sought a way to reduce the agent call load in their customer call centers and also add new revenue-generating applications

■ **The Solution**
IBM WebSphere® Voice Response application, IBM @server pSeries™ Servers

■ **The Benefits**
40% reduction of call center agent-assisted calls, fully automated TV voting revenue-generating application, improved customer satisfaction with less hold time

South Africa's largest cellular provider

Vodacom is a South African-based cellular communications company providing Global System for Mobile (GSM) communications services to customers in South Africa, Tanzania, Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The cellular network started commercial operation in June 1994, and within the first month Vodacom had attracted 50,000 subscribers. A year and a half later the number of subscribers passed the 300,000 mark. Today, over 7.5 million customers are served throughout the continent.

IBM gets the call

To handle the influx of calls, Vodacom began searching for a technology provider that could implement a scalable system for their call centers that would provide value-added services to its rapidly growing subscriber base. Already a customer and familiar with their depth of service, Vodacom chose IBM, and they chose the IBM WebSphere Voice Response application. WebSphere Voice Response is now used for both incoming customer care calls and revenue-generating services such as call-in voting for popular TV shows like Pop Idol and Big Brother. Vodacom's call-handling, vote-tallying, billing and revenue sharing are all handled by WebSphere Voice Response.

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> *André Sprünken*
> *Manager*
> *VAS Core Systems*

WebSphere Voice Response: Offloading Vodacom customer care

André Sprünken is responsible for the application of Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and voice mail technology at Vodacom. His company selected the IBM DirectTalk™ product in 1995 and upgraded to WebSphere Voice Response three years later. The applications run on IBM @server pSeries servers, which combine flexibility and power with high-end self-management features.

"Before WebSphere Voice Response, multiple Vodacom call centers were handling calls manually, and some centers were busier than others", says Mr. Sprünken. "With the help of IBM, the automated system now distributes calls more evenly across the centers and offloads the agent load by 40 percent. We also reduced the average waiting time for incoming calls. For example, if a cellular customer needs current account information or wants to create a voice mailbox, they don't need to interact with an agent. Non-WebSphere Voice Response calls are diverted to the agent queue. Our next step is to allow WebSphere Voice Response to intelligently queue calls to specific agents, depending on their skills and availability", he continues.

"In the future, we would like to add voice recognition for applications such as portals, where a lot of information is presented. We would like to integrate and voice-enable Web and mobile portals", he says.

About IBM WebSphere Voice Response

WebSphere Voice Response for AIX® is well-suited for large enterprises or telecommunications businesses such as Vodacom. It is scalable, robust and designed for continuous 24x7 operation. A WebSphere Voice Response for AIX system can support between 12 and 480 concurrent telephone channels on a single system. Multiple systems can be networked together to provide larger configurations.

With the ability to answer and process a large number of calls simultaneously, the IBM WebSphere Voice Response application can reduce caller wait time and improve overall customer satisfaction. Information is readily available to customers in an easy and responsive manner.

Today, over 1,000 applications run on WebSphere Voice Response — a testimony to the power, flexibility and stability of the system.

For more information

To learn more about how IBM can help your business take advantage of conversational e-business, visit our Web site at **ibm.com**/pvc or contact your local IBM sales representative.

G210-1580-00